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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000061

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PDP EDUCATES CANDIDATES ON PLATFORM

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Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1. (C) SUMMARY.** In an attempt to communicate a unified party ideology in the campaigning for the 2007 elections, the PDP party held a three-day retreat for all its candidates. The retreat focused on educating the candidates on the PDP Manifesto, a fifty-page policy document outlining objectives and specific actions in all sectors of Nigerian policy. According to leadership within the PDP, the decision to adopt a concrete policy ideology comes with the risk of losing dissenting members, but it is a necessary step in the development of the party. The document is sufficiently detailed to offer a "roadmap" and clear guidance around which party candidates can shape their campaigns. In so doing, the manifesto also sets standards to which elected officials can later be held accountable and promotes an issues-driven agenda for the 2007 campaigns. Whether the new manifesto amounts to mere empty campaign promises or a new paradigm remains to be seen and will depend not only on the elected officials themselves, but on willingness of the Nigerian public to demand accountability. END SUMMARY.

**¶2. (SBU)** PDP leadership held a party "retreat" on January 8-10 in Abuja for all candidates, from president to local assembly, to present a unified party platform for the upcoming elections. Though announced at the last minute, Poloff estimates 1,200 candidates and interested persons attended the event. Presidential candidate Umaru Yar'Adua and his vice presidential running mate Goodluck Jonathan were in attendance for select presentations on Monday and Wednesday. State and local government candidates were also well represented. Poloff noted the attendance of Nigerian Diaspora representatives from the U.S. and Trinidad as well.

**¶3. (C)** Unlike the somber national convention in December, this event took on an almost festive feel, with candidates mingling and continuous discussions (both inside and outside the event hall). The event itself was much more a presentation of the party platform, with media present and papers presented by current administration officials and academics, than a thought-provoking retreat. Contrary to press reports which circulated alleging "protests" at the retreat by National Assembly members not backed for a second term, the only sign of disagreement or dissension came in

response to the presentation by an INEC official on elections preparations. Even then, however, comments and questions (though dissenting in nature) were professional and polite.

PDP MANIFESTO -- DEFINING A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

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**14.** (SBU) The retreat centered on educating PDP candidates on the party Manifesto, a fifty-page document outlining party policy in all areas of the national interest, including education, economy, natural resources, defense, environment, industrial policy, health foreign policy, housing and others (some 35 in all). The manifesto provides a clear party platform upon which candidates are to run as well as an overarching ideology in the form of its mission statement: "to build and sustain a nation with a vibrant economy designed to serve the people's interest, in which good governance, market forces and transparent institutions combine to enthron a free and democratic society that will guarantee equity, justice and equal opportunity to all citizens."

**15.** (C) According to party leadership, the manifesto was developed with the intent of unifying the party and providing an ideology. Agape Kramer, Assistant Director of the PDP and Coordinator of Foreign Chapters, told Poloff that given the hasty formation of political parties in the run-up to the 1999 handover to a civilian government and the focus on personalities rather than substance, there is an ideological vacuum. Kramer admitted that the establishment of a concrete platform may mean the party loses some members (as consensus in a party as large as the PDP is nearly impossible), but, she maintained, it is a necessary step to becoming a "normal" policy-driven party capable of setting the agenda for a nation. COMMENT: The centering of political parties and agendas on personalities rather than policies has long been a

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shortcoming of the Nigerian party system. While this represents a clear attempt to improve on the system by establishing an ideological basis for the party, it must also be viewed within the context of recent changes to the PDP constitution which make Obasanjo the only individual eligible to chair the party. Among the stated objectives of the manifesto are several references to the party leadership as the source of policy direction to the government and strengthening the relationship between the party and the government. END COMMENT.

PDP OBJECTIVES - CONTINUING THE NEEDS REFORMS

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**16.** (SBU) Based on the administration's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the manifesto is a clear continuation of reforms begun under the Obasanjo administration. The manifesto outlines the progress made under the current administration, overarching objective on a federal, state and local level, and specific steps to achieve the objectives for each of the 35 areas. Priority is given to programs to: reduce poverty and recreate a middle class, reform the banking sector to promote small and medium businesses, enhance the delivery of public sector services, increase land ownership as a form of capital for entrepreneurs, improve infrastructure, create a national database to include a national identity card and housing address system and the promotion of peace, security, stability and sustainable growth.

**17.** (SBU) Objectives and the steps to be taken to achieve them are at times sweepingly broad, though in general they are sufficiently detailed to form a concise platform for the party. Economic objectives are focused on developing a middle class, creating easy access to transferable property rights, protecting vulnerable groups through initiatives designed to integrate them in the formal economy, and improving investment in physical, human and social

infrastructure. The manifesto also outlines "irreducible minimums," concrete national minimum standards in specific sectors. A few of the minimums outlined include:

EDUCATION:

- free and compulsory basic education and physical rehabilitation of all schools
- improvement in teacher/student ration and provision of mid-day meal for all students
- 100 percent school enrollment and reduction of illiteracy to 10 percent

HEALTH:

- free medical services for women and children under five
- rehabilitation or construction of a standard health care center in each ward and a general hospital in each local government area (LGA).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

- provide potable water in all communities
- improve quality of life through deliberate policies that increase economic opportunities

**¶18.** (SBU) In an effort to ensure implementation and track progress on the key objectives, the manifesto plans for a joint annual public forum to be held at the federal, state and local level each year for the review of the performance of elected officials. The manifesto calls for such forums to include elected officials and "party stakeholders," though it does not spell out who may be included as stakeholders. Failure to adhere to the party objectives will be sanctioned by the party as a form of misconduct. The party leadership envisions the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework in the coming months to be used to monitor the performance of specific officials.

A NEW KIND OF LEADER -- HONOR, INTEGRITY AND DISCIPLINE

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**¶19.** (SBU) A recurring theme in the presentations at the retreat was also the need for a new paradigm among elected leaders -- the emergence of "a critical mass of patriotic, motivated, disciplined, honest, hard-working and progressive leaders" who will be "islands of honor and integrity." Copies of the PDP Code of Conduct and Desirable Qualities Index were distributed and the theme of accountability to the

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Nigerian people was repeated throughout the three-day event. Presenters called on PDP candidates to raise the professional level of politics through adherence to the Code and personal accountability, to include living up to campaign promises and not making promises that can't be kept. The Code specifically calls for adherence to all laws (specifically the Electoral Law, Nigerian Constitution, and all party laws and regulations). It prohibits the disruption of lawful rallies, political meetings or other activities of any party or candidate. As well, it prohibits any activities capable of inciting violence to prevent opposition political activity. It specifically refers to the recruitment, engagement, sponsorship, funding or encouragement of thugs or terrorists. With regard to party conventions, congresses and events, the Code prohibits the paying of bribes, encouraging of supporters to cast more than one vote, tampering with ballot boxes, procurement of election results, or recruitment of mercenary voters to disrupt polling.

COMMENT -- A POSITIVE STEP

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**¶10.** (C) COMMENT. The PDP retreat represents a positive step in Nigeria's democratic development. Not only does it represent a first move by the PDP to establish a basic party ideology upon which its candidates can campaign, but it is the first real attempt by any political party to define itself by an ideology rather than an individual. While the notion of the party setting a political agenda for the government may leave room for speculation that this is but another attempt by Obasanjo to remain in control after he

leaves office, the positive externalities cannot be ignored. By publishing concrete steps to be taken at federal, state and local levels to achieve party objectives, the party has opened its elected officials up to the possibility of being held accountable to the voting public for achieving those objectives. It has also raised the ante in the political landscape, putting down a marker of a party ideology that is not personality-dependent. Whether the new manifesto amounts to mere empty campaign promises or a new paradigm remains to be seen. Given past history, success will depend not only on the elected officials themselves, but on the willingness of the Nigerian public to demand accountability.

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